

REMARKS OF SENATOR SAM J. ERVIN, JR., OF NORTH CAROLINA,
AT THE DEDICATION OF THE VISITOR CENTER AND HEADQUARTERS
FOR THE RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK AT RICHMOND,
VIRGINIA, AT 3:00 P.M. EASTERN STANDARD TIME ON SATURDAY,
MAY 16, 1959.

For Release
on Delivery

OUR INHERITANCE: AN INDESTRUCTIBLE UNION OF INDESTRUCTIBLE STATES

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We meet today on the site of the famous Chimborazo Confederate Hospital in the erstwhile capital of the Confederacy to dedicate the generous gift of the people of Richmond to the United States for use as a Visitor Center and Headquarters for the Richmond National Battlefield Park.

I am grateful for the invitation to participate in this dedication because of the opportunity it offers me to commend the National Park Service, and because of the part my own State, North Carolina, played in the great conflict which Collier Cobb, one of my beloved teachers at Chapel Hill, was accustomed to call the Uncivil War.

The National Park Service merits the highest praise for its unceasing devotion to its patriotic task of preserving and making available to all the people the nation's historic shrines. As one who has been privileged during recent months to visit the battlefields at Gettysburg, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania, I bear witness that the National Park Service emphasizes "with a touch impartially tender" that the unconquerable spirit of those who wore the blue and the undying valor of those who wore the gray constitute the common heritage of all Americans, regardless of whether they dwell above or below the Mason and Dixon Line.

I trust you will pardon at this point an allusion rather personal in nature. I cannot come to the Old Dominion without experiencing emotions similar to those which prompted Moses to remove his sandals from his feet because he stood on holy ground. Kindred of mine fought for the Confederacy in virtually every engagement on Virginia soil from Bethel to Appomattox. One of my great-uncles was killed in action at Seven Pines. Another fell in combat on the Darbytown Road.

In the words of Britain's heroic poet, Rupert Brooke:

"These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhopèd serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality."

Since their dust is commingled forever with Virginia's good earth,
Virginia to me is hallowed ground.

These dedicatory services call to mind words quoted by Father
Abraham J. Ryan, the poet laureate of the Confederacy, in the headnote
to his poem entitled A Land Without Ruins.

"A land without ruins is a land without memories--a land
without memories is a land without history....Crowns of
roses fade--crowns of thorns endure."

The Richmond National Battlefield Park, which was established in
1944 and now contains 691 acres, is located in a land storied in memories
and history. This is true because it is located in a land which has
suffered ruins and worn a crown of thorns.

As the capital of the Confederacy, Richmond was the chief military
prize of a fratricidal war, which lasted four long years and sent about
530,000 Americans to untimely graves. Of those so dying, thousands were
killed or mortally wounded in battles and skirmishes fought in areas
lying within or near the Richmond National Battlefield Park.

Let me enumerate a few of the major engagements occurring within
these areas:

1. The Battle of Seven Pines, which was fought at Fair
Oaks, six miles east of Richmond, on May 31 and June 1, 1862,
when the retreating Confederate Army under General Joseph
E. Johnston turned and fought to a standstill the Union
forces commanded by General George B. McClellan.
2. The Seven Days' Battle, which was fought at Mechanicsville,
Gaines' Mill, Savage Station, Fraziers' Farm, White Oak Swamp,
and Malvern Hill in the neighborhood of Richmond from June 26
to July 2, 1862, when the Confederate forces under General
Robert E. Lee made a series of counterattacks upon General
McClellan's army and removed its threat to Richmond.
3. The Battle of Yellow Tavern, which was fought at the
Yellow Tavern six miles north of Richmond on May 11, 1864,
when the gallant Confederate cavalier, General J. E. B.
Stuart, overtook General Philip H. Sheridan, and sacrificed
his own life in a desperate but successful effort to save
Richmond from capture by General Sheridan's forces.

4. The Battle of Cold Harbor, which was fought at Cold Harbor, ten miles northeast of Richmond, from May 31 to June 12, 1864, when General U. S. Grant continued the campaign of attrition begun by him at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania by throwing massive Union forces against the Confederates under General Lee, who held a strongly entrenched line.

5. The Petersburg Campaign, which began about June 15, 1864, when General Grant laid siege to Richmond and Petersburg, and continued until April 2, 1865, when General Lee abandoned Richmond and Petersburg and started the retreat, which ended in his surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

We are prompted to attend this ceremony by two motives. One, which is external and objective, is our desire to witness the dedication of a Visitor Center and Headquarters marking the beginning of an expanded service by the National Park Service to those who visit the Richmond National Battlefield Park. The other, which is internal and subjective, is our wish to do reverence to those brave men of the North and those brave men of the South, who fought near Richmond for causes they believed right and whose silent tents are now spread "on Fame's eternal camping ground."

It is well for us to call to mind the valor and sacrifice of those who wore the blue and those who wore the gray. This is so because

"If their memories part
From our land and heart
'Twould be a wrong to them,
And a shame for us."

The men of the North fought to preserve the Union, and the men of the South fought to preserve the States. As a consequence, all Americans have inherited a country whose Constitution contemplates "an indestructible Union composed of indestructible States."

If we are to do full reverence to those who wore the blue and those who wore the gray, we must do more than call to remembrance their valor and their sacrifices. We must dedicate ourselves to the preservation of the America they bequeathed to us.

This America is threatened by foes within and foes without.

The foes without are the Communist nations which strive to erase all human dignity and all human freedom from earth's surface,

A Confederate officer from North Carolina was mortally wounded during an advance on the second day at Gettysburg. After being knocked to the ground by the impact of the bullet which wounded him, he took from his pocket a pencil and a piece of paper, and wrote these words with his dying hand: "Tell my father I fell with my face to the enemy."

America will be able to defend herself against the Communists and all other external foes as long as her sons are ready to die with their faces to her enemies.

Sometimes it seems that the foes within pose a more serious threat to America than the foes without. It is certainly easier to devise a defense against external foes.

The foes within are those who seek to destroy our "indestructible Union of indestructible States" by reducing the States to meaningless zeros on the nation's map and concentrating all governmental powers in the Federal Government. If they should succeed in their objective, their success would sound the death knell of liberty in America. This is true because "the States are the only breakwater against the ever pounding surf which threatens to submerge the individual and destroy the only kind of society in which personality can survive."

America's protection against the foes within is to be found in the answer to this prayer:

"God give us men! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands;
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor--men who will not lie.
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty and in private thinking."